

NSC BRIEFING

29 April 1954

INDOCHINA MILITARY PICTURE

I. Dien Bien Phu garrison barely hanging on.

A. "Asphyxiation" tactics of  
whittling it down.

1. This involves isolation  
of individual subpositions;  
garrisons then succumb or  
withdraw.

B. French abandoned Huguette 6 on  
17 April. Lost Huguette 1 on  
23 April.

C. Airstrip drop zone thus con-  
stricted. But drops been  
sufficient maintain garrison.

From 11-26 April tonnage roughly  
equaled estimated consumption.

*As of 27 April - estimated 3-5 days  
supply of all types on hand.*

NSA, DIA reviews completed

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D. French regrouped most of positions east of river into two major strongpoints, Eliane Haut and Eliane Bas.

E. Enemy been most active in northwest but photos on 26 April showed trenches approaching Eliane 1 and Eliane 2. Shows possible pincer movement against these two high ground positions.

II. Navarre says fall of bastion matter of military mathematics.

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A. Volunteers continue to be sent in, however.

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B. These mostly Legionnaires with  
no jump training; about 400

arrived *between 13 + 27 April*

C. Daily losses exceed replacements;  
French on 25 April list 900 litter  
cases, 1,000 walking wounded.

D. Total men estimated 9-12,000,  
including wounded.

III. Relief column from north Laos appears  
impractical.

A. Four battalions (mostly Laotians)  
now <sup>29</sup>~~35~~ miles southwest garrison.  
Have mission divert enemy  
reinforcements.

B. This force must be reinforced  
to several times its size to  
relieve Dien Bien Phu.

1. Navarre says he lacks air  
strength <sup>to</sup><sub>^</sub> support such  
larger group.

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IV. Viet Minh in poor shape too.

A. French estimate some units have  
50% replacements.

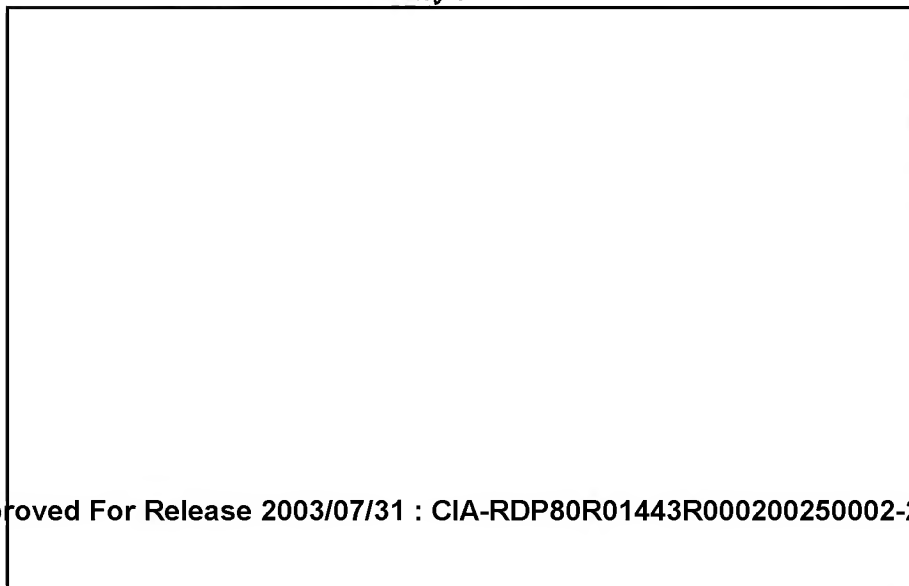
B.



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C. Estimated <sup>present</sup> enemy strength about  
36,000. Believed casualties  
about 13,000.

D. French think enemy can make  
another mass assault, maybe  
about 1 May.



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VII. Enemy saturation Tonkin delta makes precarious situation there.

A. Cogny feels battle for delta might be lost at Dien Bien Phu. (Released Viet Minh regulars there can be concentrated delta start of fall dry season. Probably can't hit hard in the near future.)

B. Viet Minh already begun hitting hard at Hanoi-Haiphong communications, isolated guard posts. (69,500 enemy troops inside delta, including regulars, regionals and militia.)

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C. Fall Dien Bien Phu might be  
signal even greater effort  
against airfields and towns,  
as well as road and rail networks.

D. French reserves may be unable  
counter such action.

E.

Viet Minh commando  
preparations for raids against  
major air bases in various Indo-  
china areas.

F. Also, French fear Viet Minh plans  
demonstrations Hanoi, other major  
cities on May Day, on Ho Chi  
Minh's birth date (19 May) or on  
fall Dien Bien Phu. These could  
be strongly anti-American.

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1. Cogny refers repeated requests <sup>to</sup> Navarre to transfer troops from other areas Indochina to delta.

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"NO LONGER QUESTIONED IF DBP CAN BE TAKEN, BUT WHETHER VM WILL OVERRUN IT BY ASSAULT OR SLOWLY STRANGLE IT.

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